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ABSTRACT

During the 1979-1980 school year, 23 Old Order Amish pupils in the Pleasant Hill School near Bloomfield, Iowa, took the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. On the language arts subtest, five of six third grade students ranked above 50% in capitalization, four ranked above 50% in spelling and punctuation, and three ranked above 50% in usage. Four third grade students ranked above 50% overall. Among seven fourth graders, five ranked above 50% in spelling, four ranked above 50% in punctuation and usage, and two ranked above 50% in capitalization. Overall, four ranked above 50%. Among five sixth graders, four ranked above 50% in spelling, punctuation, and usage, and three ranked above 50% in capitalization. Overall, four ranked over 50%. Among three seventh graders, two ranked over 50% in spelling and usage and one in capitalization and punctuation. Only one seventh grader ranked over 50% overall. Both eighth graders ranked over 90% on all measures except capitalization, in which one student's score fell to 62%. Both ranked over 90% overall. Despite variation among themselves and among grades, students were strongest in spelling and weakest in capitalization. Fifteen ranked over 50% on the total language arts subtests. (SB)

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# Old Order Amish, Culture, and the Language Arts

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OLD ORDER AMISH, CULTURE, AND THE LANGUAGE ARTS

The Old Order Amish represent a unique subculture in society. They adhere strongly to tradition. Horses and buggies are used to transport people and goods. Horse drawn farm equipment, rather than tractors and self-propelled combines with air-conditioned cabs and power steering, is utilized in farming.

Old Order Amish pupils generally experience eight years of formal schooling. Usually, Old Order Amish are employed to teach their own pupils in a one-room schoolhouse. Outdoor toilets, a horse barn holding horses during the school day, and buggies are located on the schoolgrounds. Generally, the school year lasts eight months.

Amish Education

The writer, many times, has visited and observed Old Order Amish pupils in Pleasant Hill School, near Bloomfield, Iowa. With basically no reprimands from the teacher, these pupils rather continuously work on assignments in the classroom. Inward discipline is apparent. Two Old Order Amish men taught thirty-four pupils seated in rows and columns during the 1979-1980 school year. During one visitation made by the writer, each pupil had completed an illustration depicting a verse or more from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7 in the New Testament). Secular as well as religious admonitions are posted on classroom walls, e.g., "Be so strong that you will never do wrong"; "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"(Galations 6:7).

Teachers in Pleasant Hill School write assignments on the chalkboard

for each grade level of pupils to complete. After completing an assignment, at the appropriate time, the teacher orally with pupils checks answers related to assignments. Pupils then learn which are correct as well as incorrect answers. Incorrect answers are corrected and involved pupils are ready to work on the next sequential lesson. Sometimes, readiness experiences precede assigned learning activities. Thus, an Old Order Amish teacher orally reads to pupils a model for writing friendly letters contained in the basal textbook, English Is Our Language, D. C. Heath Publishers, after which each pupil wrote a friendly letter.

Old Order Amish Achievement in the Language Arts

In February, 1980*, Old Order Amish Pupils in Pleasant Hill School took the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Six third grade pupils revealed the following achievement in language arts:

| | Spelling | | Capitalization | | Punctuation | | Usage | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | GE** | PR*** | GE | PR | GE | PR | GE | PR | GE | PR |
| Student one | 5.7 | 90 | 5.0 | 83 | 4.9 | 79 | 6.6 | 97 | 5.6 | 92 |
| Student two | 4.8 | 78 | 5.0 | 83 | 5.8 | 90 | 4.6 | 71 | 5.0 | 83 |
| Student three | 2.6 | 24 | 2.5 | 21 | 1.4 | 2 | 1.8 | 13 | 2.1 | 9 |
| Student four | 2.1 | 13 | 3.5 | 50 | 1.7 | 6 | 1.6 | 9 | 2.2 | 11 |
| Student five | 5.7 | 90 | 4.2 | 68 | 3.9 | 60 | 6.3 | 94 | 5.0 | 83 |
| Student six | 4.3 | 69 | 5.8 | 92 | 6.2 | 94 | 3.1 | 42 | 4.8 | 80 |

* Test results computerized printout

** GE = grade equivalent

*** PR = percentile rank

In the area of spelling four of six pupils had a percentile rank of well above fifty. These four pupils in ascending order had percentile ranks of 69, 78, 90 and 90. The remaining two pupils had percentile ranks of 13 and 24. In the area of capitalization, five of six pupils had a percentile rank of fifty or higher. In ascending order these percentile ranks were 50, 68, 83, 83, and 92. The remaining pupil had a percentile rank of 21 in capitalization. In punctuation four of six pupils had percentile ranks of well above fifty. These percentile ranks in ascending order were 60, 79, 90, and 94. The remaining two pupils had percentile ranks of 2 and 6. In usage, three of six pupils achieved a percentile rank of fifty or higher. These ascending order percentile ranks were 71, 94, and 97. The remaining three pupils had percentage ranks of 9 and 13, 42.

For the total language arts skills subtest of The Iowa Test of Basic Skills, four of six Old Order Amish pupils revealed percentile ranks well above fifty. In ascending order these percentile ranks were 80, 83, 83 and 92. The remaining two pupils had percentile ranks of 9 and 11.

Seven fourth grade Old Order Amish pupils revealed the following achievement in language arts skills in the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

| | Spelling | | Capitalization | | Punctuation | | Usage | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | GE | PR | GE | PR | GE | PR | GE | PR | GE | PR |
| Pupil one | 7.1 | 92 | 5.8 | 76 | 6.7 | 88 | 7.1 | 89 | 6.7 | 91 |
| Pupil two | 3.0 | 17 | 4.1 | 40 | 3.4 | 25 | 3.6 | 34 | 3.5 | 25 |
| Pupil three | 4.0 | 38 | 3.0 | 15 | 2.5 | 8 | 3.9 | 39 | 3.4 | 23 |
| Pupil four | 4.9 | 59 | 4.4 | 48 | 4.5 | 50 | 3.6 | 34 | 4.4 | 47 |
| Pupil five | 6.8 | 89 | 4.1 | 40 | 5.8 | 76 | 6.3 | 79 | 5.8 | 77 |
| Pupil six | 8.0 | 99 | 3.4 | 23 | 3.0 | 17 | 5.4 | 66 | 5.0 | 61 |
| Pupil seven | 6.4 | 84 | 4.8 | 57 | 4.5 | 50 | 4.9 | 57 | 5.2 | 65 |

Five of seven fourth grade Old Order Amish pupils scored above a percentile rank of fifty in spelling. These percentile ranks in ascending order were 59, 84, 89, 92, and 99. The remaining two pupils had percentile ranks of 17 and 38 in spelling. In the area of capitalization, two of seven fourth grade pupils had percentile ranks above fifty. These were percentile ranks of 57 and 76. The remaining pupils had percentile ranks of 15, 23, 40, 40, and 48.

Four of seven fourth grade pupils had percentile ranks of fifty or higher in punctuation. In ascending order, these percentile ranks were 50, 50, 76 and 88. The remaining fourth grade pupils in ascending order of percentile ranks were 8, 17, and 25.

Four of seven pupils had percentile ranks above fifty in usage. In ascending order, these percentile ranks were 57, 66, 79, and 89. The remaining three pupils had percentile ranks in ascending order of 34, 34, and 39.

Four of seven pupils were above the fiftieth percentile rank in total language skills. These percentile ranks in ascending order were 61, 65, 77, and 91. Three remaining pupils in ascending order had percentile ranks of 23, 25, and 47.

Five sixth grade Old Order Amish pupils scored the following in language arts skills:

| | Spelling | | Capitalization | | Punctuation | | Usage | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | GE | PR | GE | PR | GE | PR | GE | PR | GE | PR |
| Student one | 7.7 | 70 | 5.2 | 28 | 7.5 | 67 | 6.3 | 47 | 6.7 | 54 |
| Student two | 8.7 | 84 | 7.7 | 68 | 9.7 | 94 | 8.7 | 80 | 8.7 | 86 |
| Student three | 9.0 | 87 | 8.2 | 75 | 8.5 | 81 | 10.4 | 97 | 9.0 | 89 |
| Student four | 4.8 | 22 | 4.5 | 17 | 5.6 | 35 | 7.2 | 60 | 5.5 | 32 |
| Student five | 10.2 | 97 | 7.3 | 63 | 8.5 | 81 | 6.7 | 53 | 8.2 | 79 |

Four of five sixth grade pupils had percentile ranks above fifty in spelling. In ascending order, these percentile ranks were 70, 84, 87, and 97. The remaining pupil had a percentile rank of 22. In capitalization skills, three of five pupils had percentile ranks above fifty. In ascending order, these percentile ranks were 63, 68, and 75. The remaining two pupils in ascending order had percentile ranks of 17 and 28. In punctuation, four of five pupils scored above a percentile rank of fifty. In ascending order, these percentile ranks were 67, 81, 81, and 94. The remaining pupil scored a percentile rank of 35 in punctuation. In usage, four of five pupils had percentile ranks above 50. These percentile ranks in ascending order were 53, 60, 80, and 97. The remaining pupil scored a percentile rank of 47. For the total language skills test, four of five pupils had a percentile rank above 50. In ascending order, these percentile ranks were 54, 79, 86, and 89. The remaining pupil had a percentile rank of 32.

Three seventh grade Old Order Amish pupils scored the following percentile ranks in language arts skills, according to the Iowa Test of Basic Skills:

| | Spelling | | Capitalization | | Punctuation | | Usage | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | GE | PR | GE | PR | GE | PR | GE | PR | GE | PR |
| Pupil one | 8.0 | 58 | 10.4 | 86 | 8.0 | 58 | 8.6 | 64 | 8.8 | 70 |
| Pupil two | 6.5 | 35 | 4.5 | 11 | 7.6 | 52 | 8.6 | 64 | 6.8 | 39 |
| Pupil three | 9.0 | 73 | 2.4 | 1 | 5.8 | 26 | 7.4 | 49 | 6.2 | 30 |

Two of three pupils had percentile ranks above fifty in spelling. These percentile ranks were 58 and 73. The remaining pupil had a percentile rank of 35. In capitalization, one pupil had a percentile rank of 86 with the remaining two pupils having percentile ranks of one and eleven. In punctuation,

in ascending order, three seventh grade pupils had the following percentile ranks in punctuation: 26, 52, and 58. In usage, two of three pupils scored above a percentile rank of fifty. These percentile ranks were 64, and 64. The remaining pupil had a percentile rank of 49 in usage. In the total language skills test, in ascending order, three seventh grade pupils had percentile ranks of 30, 39, and 70.

Two eighth grade Old Order Amish pupils achieved the following in language arts:

| | Spelling | | Capitalization | | Punctuation | | Usage | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | GE | PR | GE | PR | GE | PR | GE | PR | GE | PR |
| **Pupil one** | 12.7 | 98 | 11.8 | 90 | 11.8 | 92 | 12.4 | 95 | 12.2 | 98 |
| Pupil two | 12.7 | 98 | 9.5 | 62 | 12.3 | 96 | 12.4 | 95 | 11.7 | 94 |

Each of the two eighth graders scored on the ninetieth percentile or higher in the following facets of language arts achievement: spelling, punctuation, usage and total language skills. In capitalization, one pupil scored on the ninetieth percentile while the other scored on the sixty-second percentile.

In Summary

Old Order Amish pupil achievement in the language arts varies much from pupil to pupil in grades 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8. There were no fifth grade pupils involved in the study. (Pleasant Hill School had no fifth graders during the 1979-80 school year.)

The lowest percentile rank for any one pupil in a specific area of the language arts was a percentile rank of one in capitalization. The highest

percentile rank was ninety-nine for a pupil in the area of spelling.

Seventeen of twenty-three pupils achieved a percentile rank of fifty or higher in spelling. Thirteen of twenty-three pupils had a percentile rank of fifty or higher in capitalization. Sixteen of twenty-three pupils had a percentile rank of fifty or higher in punctuation. Fifteen of twenty-three pupils had a percentile rank of fifty or higher in usage. Fifteen of twenty-three pupils achieved a percentile rank of fifty or higher in the total language arts skills subtest, according to the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.